

A SPINNING WHEEL



THE front gate clicked, and a woman, looking up from her sewing beside the window, saw a tramp walk round the house to the back door. She waited for the knock, then opened the door. Before her stood a young man. He was not nearly so old as she had supposed from seeing his slouching gait as he passed the window.

He asked for food, and the woman brought him in and seated him at the table while she prepared some plain fare for him, for he appeared hungry and discouraged. As he ate she learned his story.

At seventeen he had left home and had been away for nearly four years. This was his twenty-first birthday. He had run away from home because of the monotony of life there and the hardships that he thought fell to his lot.

"And still, it was not so much the hard work," he said. "I wanted a change, so I went away. My parents were kind, and they loved me; but I didn't think of that then, although I have thought of it many times since. I'm more tired of this wandering life than I ever was of the continual grind at home. A fellow like me might as well give up the job of living and drop out."

The woman was silent for a moment; then she pointed to a family heirloom that stood in the corner of the sitting room. "My grandmother used that spinning wheel for many years," she said. "My mother has told me that she used to hear her mother working away and humming an old-fashioned song after the other members of the household had gone to bed. Most of the wool that went into the clothes of the family was spun on that wheel. It served its generation well, and still it never did anything except go round and round. But to go round and round was what it was made to do. There it stood in the same corner of the room, year after year, singing its little tune and spinning out its slender thread. It was a monotonous life, and yet the spinning wheel has a place of honor in our home now. We love it because of the service it performed for those we love."

The young man finished his meal and, rising from the table, started to go. As he stepped out on the porch he turned back again and said, "Thank you for the story of the spinning wheel. I'm going home again. I've covered one big circle of several thousand miles in four years; if I had stayed at home and had gone round my little circle of daily living, I should have a home of my own now and not be begging bread at back doors. When I've learned to spin without breaking thread, I'll write to you. Good-by."

The woman went back into the room, gave the spinning wheel a pat with her hand, and dusted it carefully. As she took up her sewing again by the window she said to herself:

"I believe I, too, needed the story of the spinning wheel. I'm glad I have dresses to make and stockings to darn and food to cook. I'd a thousand times rather be a spinning wheel in a home that I love than a wanderer without a friend or an abiding place."

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